



# News Release

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## **STATE STEPS UP FIGHT AGAINST OBESITY WITH NEW "FRONT LINES" AD CAMPAIGN** *Parents Urged Not to Take Obesity Lightly*

SACRAMENTO - The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) today launched a new statewide multimedia ad campaign urging parents to take more responsibility in the fight against childhood obesity. State officials unveiled the new ads to more than 700 nutritionists, educators, researchers, retailers and policymakers who were gathered at the Sacramento Convention Center for a two-day Social Marketing Conference focused on obesity prevention.

The "Front Lines" campaign positions a doctor and teacher at the front lines of the fight, educating parents about the lifelong results of poor eating habits and low physical activity levels. The ads promote the importance of parental involvement in ensuring that children consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, as well as engage in physical activity every day. By featuring a doctor and teacher, trustworthy sources to parents, the ads effectively communicate the seriousness of the epidemic of childhood obesity.

"The increasing number of Californians who are overweight or obese is a public health crisis that demands action by government, private industry, communities and parents," said California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Kim Belshé. "These new ads will educate viewers about the risks of poor diet and lack of physical activity and spur parents and communities into action. Childhood obesity must not be taken lightly."

Over the last two decades, the prevalence of overweight children in California has doubled. Among adolescents, the prevalence has tripled. Currently, more than one-third of 9- to 11-year-old children and one-fifth of middle and high school students are overweight or at risk of being overweight. Eating more fruits and vegetables every day can help reduce the risk of serious health problems and chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and many common cancers.

"Governor Schwarzenegger has delivered the bold leadership necessary to reverse the obesity epidemic," Belshé said. "From increasing access to healthy foods in our children's schools to standing with business, education and community leaders to commit to improve California's health and well-being, this governor has taken action to turn the tide on obesity."

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“As the rates of obesity and overweight continue to climb, Californians are becoming desensitized to the epidemic,” said interim State Public Health Officer Dr. Howard Backer. “People seem to accept it without considering the serious health risks involved. We are committed to changing this attitude in our practice and in the community.”

The campaign, scheduled to run August through October, includes TV, radio and outdoor English and Spanish ads. It shows viewers that “too much high-calorie food and not enough physical activity” will lead to serious health risks among our children. The ads are part of a broad-based strategy led by CDHS’ *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families (Network)* to educate low-income Californians about the benefits of healthy living. Efforts also include community outreach and public education activities, reinforced by the advertising campaign’s call to action.

“We are proud of the work being done by the *Network* to reduce the alarming rates of overweight Californians, especially among low-income adults and Food Stamp recipients,” said Dr. Backer. “Communities must recognize the health risks of obesity and play an active role in ensuring access to healthy foods and safe environments. The governor will be addressing this issue first-hand in his upcoming summit.”

To encourage California’s leaders to take action to fight obesity, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will convene a Governor’s Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity on September 15 in Sacramento. Leaders from the business, transportation, education, government and public health communities will join the governor and commit to reforms that will improve California’s health and well-being.

The *Network* is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Stamp Program to urge low-income Californians to eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables and engage in physical activity every day. The Food Stamp Program helps low-income families buy nutritious foods for a better diet. For more information, visit <http://www.ca5aday.com> or call 1-888-328-3483.